

Pre-Disaster Relations

Before disaster strikes, tribes should have emergency operations plans. Tribes also should be included in emergency management networks with local, State, and Federal partners.

However, many tribal governments currently lack emergency management resources and training. To help build emergency management capability:

- Tribal representatives can take emergency management courses, including a classroom course designed specifically for tribal governments to help them build emergency management capabilities.
 - Staff in FEMA Regional Offices can work with tribes to develop emergency operations plans, encourage participation in programs such as the National Flood Insurance Program, obtain flood insurance rate maps through the NFIP, and help tribes gain the funds and technical assistance needed to develop their ability to carry out emergency functions.
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Tribal Emergency Planning

In spite of a grassroots feeling that anticipating disaster may cause disaster, tribal governments feel a strong responsibility to protect their members and their land.

Tribal Status

A condition of Federal assistance is that a tribe must be federally recognized. The tribal status needs to be determined before initial contacts are made.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) lists recognized tribes, and updates the list regularly. Listed tribes are:

- Granted status as sovereign nations.
- Included in the U.S. Government Federal trust responsibility.

A list of federally recognized tribes can be found at [http://www.fema.gov/tribal/indian reservation](http://www.fema.gov/tribal/indianreservation).

Who Is Indian?

Tribes determine how to organize their governments, and they also determine who is Indian. Do not assume someone is or is not an Indian based on appearance. An Indian is someone who:

- Has a quantum, or percentage, of Indian blood set by an individual tribe as the criterion for membership.
- Is recognized by that tribe as a member.

If you have Indian ancestry, remember that ancestry alone does not make you an Indian. Therefore, avoid reference to your Indian heritage when representing your agency at initial meetings with tribes.

Contacting Tribes

Any official relationship with a tribe begins with an introductory meeting with the tribe's elected leadership. To prepare for a meeting:

- Review information about the tribe. Tribal websites describe tribes and identify current leaders. Many tribes have publications that they are pleased to share upon request.
 - Respect tribal protocol. Every tribe has a procedure for contacting and arranging meetings with tribal officials.
 - Contact the FEMA Regional Tribal Liaison or others experienced in working with the tribes and ask for help arranging the meeting. These resources can help with questions about tribal protocol.
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Tribal Decision Making

Elected tribal leaders make all significant decisions for tribes. Factors to remember when discussing issues or proposals with the leadership are:

- Respect for tribal sovereignty is the key to successful relations.
 - Council resolutions are the means used to establish emergency management programs and authorize actions related to disaster assistance, hazard mitigation, and other programs.
 - Tribal lawyers attend most council meetings, and can advise on resolutions and other legal matters.
 - Meetings of tribal governing bodies proceed deliberately and address issues that may have higher priority to the tribe than emergency management or disaster matters.
 - Tribes work on their own timetable. It is important for tribes to get to know you before doing business with you. This can result in the extension of normal deadlines.
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Explaining Disaster Assistance

Tribes may need information about the declaration process, types of assistance available, and how to apply for assistance.

Many tribes view the Stafford Act requirement that State Governors request disaster assistance as a violation of tribal sovereignty. To respond to such concerns:

- Explain that as a Federal employee, you cannot go beyond the authority granted you by your agency and the law.
 - Assure the tribal leadership that all programs and assistance will be delivered to the full extent possible, and that after there is a declaration, FEMA will communicate with the tribe on a government-to-government basis.
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Setting Realistic Expectations

Tribal officials need to understand what disaster assistance can and cannot do. Be sure to make the following points when explaining disaster assistance:

- Disaster assistance is limited to repairing damage from this event only. Preexisting damage is not eligible.
 - Facilities owned by other Federal agencies, such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs, will not be eligible for repair or replacement.
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Resources

Review the following weblinks:

- FEMA's tribal website
<http://www.fema.gov/tribal>
 - Emergency management training resources
<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb>
 - Tribal websites
<http://killeenroos.com/link/amind.html>
 - Federally recognized Indian reservations
http://www.fema.gov/tribal/indian_reserv.shtm
 - Stafford Act
<http://www.fema.gov/library/stafact.shtm>
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Additional Resources

Increase your knowledge by reading books and materials about Indian people and their culture. Suggestions:

1. Basso, Keith H. *Western Apache Language and Culture*. The University of Arizona Press, Tucson and London, 1990.
 2. Beall, Merrill D. *I Will Fight No More Forever: Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce War*. University of Washington Press, 1963.
 3. Brown, Dee. *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee*. Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1970.
 4. Canby, William C. *American Indian Law in a Nutshell*. West Group, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1998.
 5. Clifton, James A. *Being and Becoming Indian*. The Dorsey Press, Chicago, 1989.
 6. Deloria, Vine, Jr. *Custer Died For Your Sins*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman and London, 1969.
 7. Diaz, Bernal. *The Conquest of Mexico: The Diary of Bernal Diaz*.
 8. Dooling, D.M., and Paul Jordon-Smith (editors). *I Become Part of It: Sacred Dimensions in Native American Life*. Parabola Books, New York, 1989.
 9. Eastman, Charles Alexander. *The Soul of an Indian*. The Classic Wisdom Collection, New World Library, San Rafael, California, 1993.
 10. Erdoes, Richards, and Alfonso Ortiz (editors). *American Indian Myths and Legends*. Pantheon Books, New York, 1984.
 11. Haines, Francis. *The Plains Indian*. Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1976.
 12. Hanke, Lewis. *Aristotle and the American Indian*. Indian Press, 1970.
 13. Highwater, Jamake. *Native Land: Sagas of North America*. Little, Brown and Company, Boston and Toronto, 1986.
 14. Hultkrantz, Ake. *Native Religions of North America*. Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1987.
 15. Laubin, Reginald and Gladys. *The Indian Tipi: Its History, Construction and Use*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1989.
 16. Lincoln, Kenneth. *The Good Red Road*. Harper and Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1987.
 17. Neihardt, John G. *Black Elk Speaks*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1959.
 18. Neihardt, John G. *Twilight of the Sioux*. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1971.
 19. Padden, R.C. *Hummingbird and the Hawk*.
 20. Ross, A.C. *Mitakuye Oyasin: We Are All Related*. Bear Press, 1990.
 21. Sale, Kirkpatrick. *The Conquest of Paradise*. Knoph Press, New York, 1990.
 22. Stegner, Wallace. *Angle of Repose*. *Just good reading about the West.
 23. Stegner, Wallace. *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs*. *Just good reading about the West.
 24. Weatherford, Jack. *Indian Givers: How the Indians Transformed the World*. Fawcett Columbine, New York, 1988.
 25. Weatherford, Jack. *Native Roots: How the Indians Enriched America*. Fawcett Columbine, New York, 1991.
 26. Wolfson, Evelyn. *Growing Up Indian*. Walker and Company, New York, 1986.
- *Young teen reading.
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Conclusion

This lesson presented how to approach and begin discussions with a tribal government about emergency management, disaster assistance, and other Federal programs including:

- Promoting emergency management in tribal communities.
 - Researching tribal status and leadership structure.
 - Making initial contact with a tribal community.
 - Explaining disaster assistance.
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